

Message Text

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21

ACTION AF-06

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 COME-00 EB-07 INR-07 LAB-04

NSAE-00 SIL-01 AID-05 DODE-00 PM-03 H-02 L-02 NSC-05

PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 /068 W

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FM AMEMBASSY LAGOS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8533

INFO AMCONSUL KADUNA

AMCONSUL IBADAN

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: ELAB, NI

SUBJECT: LABOR UNITY AGAIN POSTPONED, BUT APPEARS STEP CLOSER

REF: LAGOS 1721

SUMMARY: ULC CENTRAL WORKING COMMITTEE UNANIMOUSLY VOTED FOR MERGER INTO NLC, AFTER STORMY MEETING MARCH 23. COMMITTEE SET MAY 9-10 AS DATES FOR NATIONAL EXECUTIVE COUNCIL MEETING TO MAKE FINAL DECISION. NLC STEERING COMMITTEE HAS POSTPONED INAUGURAL DATE UNTIL AFTER ULC COUNCIL MEETS. SOME SUGGESTION ULC RELUCTANCE STEMS IN PART FROM FEAR AMONG NORTHERN NIGERIANS THAT NLC WILL POSE POLITICAL THREAT TO FMG. END SUMMARY

1. UNITED LABOUR CONGRESS (ULC) CENTRAL WORKING COMMITTEE HELD LENGTHY, AND STORMY, MEETING MARCH 23 ON QUESTION OF ULC MERGER INTO NIGERIAN LABOUR CONGRESS (NLC). LARGE CONTINGENT OF COMMITTEE MEMBERS FROM NORTHER STATES, HEADED BY ULC PRESIDENT KALTUNGO AND TEXTILE WORKERS UNION PRESIDENT ABUTU, FLEW TO LAGOS FOR MEETING. ABUTU, ACTING AS NORTHERN SPOKESMAN, ANNOUNCED NORTHERN UNIONS WERE AGAINST A MERGER AND ACCUSED SOUTHERN ULC OFFICIALS OF ATTEMPTING FORCE ULC INTO NLC FOR POLITICAL REASONS. HE CLAIMED FORMATION OF NLC

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WAS STRICTLY FOR POLITICAL PURPOSES, AND WAS AN ATTEMPT BY SOUTHERNERS TO OVERTHROW MILITARY GOVERNMENT. NORTHERN UNIONS,

HE SAID, WANT NO PART IN SUCH A SCHEME. THIS CHARGE STRONGLY DENIED BY VARIOUS SOUTHERN ULC LEADERS, WHO STATED NLC WAS STRICTLY INTERESTED IN WELFARE OF WORKERS, AND PRIMARY PURPOSE WAS TO PROTECT WORKERS BY BUILDING STRONG, UNITED UNION MOVEMENT.

2. ULC DEPUTY PRESIDENT ADEGBESAN, WHO HEADS NLC STEERING COMMITTEE, GAVE NORTHERN DELEGATES A LECTURE WHICH CONVINCED BULK OF THEM THAT NLC WAS NOT POLITICALLY MOTIVATED, AND ULC SHOULD MERGE TO HELP INSURE NLC REMAINS ON NON-POLITICAL PATH. NORTHERNERS THEN UNANIMOUSLY AGREED ULC SHOULD MERGE BUT WITH UNDERSTANDING NLC NOT BE USED FOR POLITICAL PURPOSES. COMMITTEE SET DATE FOR ULC NATIONAL EXECUTIVE COUNCIL MEETING, WHICH HAS TO APPROVE WORKING COMMITTEE DECISION, FOR MAY 9-10 IN ENUGU.

3. NLC STEERING COMMITTEE MET MARCH 24 TO CONSIDER ULC ACTION AND WELCOMED UNANIMOUS VOTE FOR MERGER. COMMITTEE AGREED POSTPONE NLC INAUGURAL CONFERENCE UNTIL AFTER ULC NATIONAL EXECUTIVE COUNCIL MEETING, WITH NO DEFINITE DATE SET FOR NLC CONFERENCE.

4. COMMENT: TWO TOP ULC LEADERS, KALTUNGO AND ODEYEMI (WHO WAS NOT AT MARCH 23 MEETING, HAVING LEFT NIGERIA AS PART OF FMG DELEGATION TO AFRICAN LABOR MINISTERS' MEETING IN GABON), CONTINUE THEIR ATTEMPTS TO KEEP ULC FROM JOINING NLC AS ONE UNIT. THEY HAVE AGAIN SUCCEEDED IN DELAYING MERGER, AND COULD YET KEEP ULC OUT IF GIVEN AMPLE TIME AND FUNDS. FACT THAT KALTUNGO APPARENTLY FUNDED FLIGHT TICKETS FOR NORTHERN MEMBERS OF CENTRAL WORKING COMMITTEE RAISES QUESTION OF SOURCE OF FUNDS, SINCE ULC CERTAINLY HAS NONE. ICFTU STILL SUSPECTED BY SOME OF POURING MONEY INTO SITUATION TO KEEP ULC IN EXISTENCE, BUT ARGUMENT PUT FORTH BY NORTHERN COMMITTEE MEMBERS CONCERNING POLITICAL PURPOSE OF NLC SUGGESTS FUNDS MAY ALSO BE COMING FROM FMG OR ITS NORTHERN SUPPORTERS WHO PERHAPS SEE NLC AS POTENTIAL THREAT TO PRESENT OR FUTURE REGIME. (HOWEVER, THERE IS AS YET NO EVIDENCE TO CONFIRM THIS SPECULATION.)

5. EVENTS IN PAST THREE MONTHS HAVE SHOWN TRADE UNIONS IN LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
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NIGERIA HOLD CONSIDERABLE POTENTIAL AS NATIONAL POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC FORCE. THIS POTENTIAL COULD ONLY BE ENHANCED IF MERGER TAKES PLACE, BUT CHALLENGE TO FMG COULD HARDLY BE CONSIDERED REALISTIC GOAL FOR NLC DURING ITS EARLY FORMATIVE PERIOD. PERHAPS ONCE ORGANIZATION HAS HAD OPPORTUNITY TO SOLIDIFY ITS SUPPORT AMONG WORKERS, AND HAS BECOME A VIABLE NATIONAL BODY, IT MIGHT BE IN POSITION TO CHALLENGE FMG. GIVEN CURRENT POLITICAL, TRIBAL AND REGIONAL DIFFERENCES WHICH SPLIT TRADE UNION MOVEMENT, HOWEVER, SIMPLE CREATION OF NLC WILL NOT IN ITSELF POSE ANY IMMEDIATE THREATS TO MILITARY REGIME.

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